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## FIRM MANAGEMENT

# 2013 Review of CCH ProSystem fx Practice Management

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CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business—ProSystem *fx* Practice Management

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From the [June 2013 review](#) of practice management systems.

**Best Firm Fit:** Accounting firms of any size seeking an on-premise practice management tool.

## Strengths

- Uses dashboard interfaces
- All inclusive solution without need to purchase additional modules
- Stable and scalable solution for firms of all sizes

## Potential Limitations

- Integration points may require custom configuration

ProSystem *fx* Practice Management is a solution designed specifically for accounting professionals. The solution includes a number of dashboards and provides users with a quick overview of their current task and project assignments. New for the current year are compatibility updates with newly released technology from Microsoft as

well as enhancements to the time entry and project management modules. Several new reports have also been added.

### **BASIC SYSTEM FUNCTIONS: 5 Stars**

ProSystem *fx* Practice Management is built on Microsoft .Net and SQL Express platforms which help ensure a sturdy and scalable solution. The current release has been further updated to be compatible with Windows 8 and the newest in-house Microsoft Server technologies. ProSystem *fx* Practice Management is operated predominantly by dashboard technology. Dashboards are provided for nearly all job functions.

The interface design features a folder tree on the left part of the screen that expands and contracts as users select options. The remainder of the screen is dedicated displaying the appropriate data or dashboard. The folder tree and all dashboards access may be controlled through user security permissions. Users can customize columns on the dashboards.

### **TIME MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES: 4.75 Stars**

ProSystem *fx* Practice Management provides a simple data entry screen for all time and expense entries. The system relies on auto complete to narrow down search results when selecting clients, projects and tasks. New for the current release are user customization options to the time data entry screen. Users may now choose which data entry columns appear as well as how they are displayed on-screen. For new staff or seasonal employees, all time entries may be sent to an administrator before posting to WIP.

Project management features are provided with ProSystem *fx* Practice Management and are directed through templates. Project templates may include any number of tasks or staff assignments. New for the current release is the ability to post time to projects instead of specific tasks within the project for firms that have shifted to a project billing model. Also new for this year is the ability to control project notes for automatically generated projects. This allows users to assign notes to just the current project instead of general notes that will carry forward to all regenerated projects.

A client dashboard is provided to assist users in managing all client related data. Users have the ability to see not only contact information, but client notes and current outstanding projects. Access to available client data may be fully controlled through data access rights. Emails may be generated in bulk and sent to clients from

within ProSystem *fx* Practice Management. All email addresses are automatically placed in the BCC field to protect to protect client privacy.

### **INVOICING FUNCTIONS: 4.75 Stars**

The invoicing process of ProSystem *fx* Practice Management is designed to allow responsible billing parties to process more information on-screen, instead of relying on paper copies. All time and expense data is accumulated and available for invoicing in real-time. Time and expense items may be transferred between projects to better align any write-up or down adjustments. Before approving invoices, users may drill down to the underlying WIP that is attached to the invoice.

Invoices are set by default firm formats that are customized through the built-in editor. Each invoice may be as detailed or summarized as desired. All accounts receivable and associated payments are maintained within the system. Deposit slips may be printed with MICR encoding with all accounting data exported through the available integration points.

### **MANAGEMENT FEATURES: 5 Stars**

ProSystem *fx* Practice Management revolves around a dashboard interface. Dashboards are provided for nearly all job functions. Partners and owners have exclusive access to a dashboard tailored to firm associated information to help gauge productivity and profitability. Quick access is provided for accounts receivable, WIP and real-time status updates on outstanding projects. Alerts may be set to bring reminders or attention to due dates, over budget projects or excessive WIP limits. Available as an add-on enhancement, ProSystem *fx* Practice Intelligence provides additional dashboard elements through use of business intelligence technology.

ProSystem *fx* Practice Management includes a number of fixed reports as well as a built-in report writer to generate custom reports. Several new fixed reports have been added for the current release. New reports include a new semi-monthly time sheet to aid in mid-month payroll runs and an employee time analysis report that provides a summary of current and year-to-date time and expenses by employee. Another new report is designed for partners and owners and provides information to better determine the profitability of specific clients, staff, locations and work types. The report relies on historical data maintained within the system. All fixed and custom generated reports may be exported to Microsoft Excel or PDF format.

Access rights are a key design feature and system defaults may be assigned by individual users or copied from user to user. Each user is provided a dashboard specific to them and displays all outstanding projects currently assigned. A time calendar is also displayed to inform the user of days that do not currently have any time posted to them. Depending on access rights, users may be able to view projects and time information of other users.

### **INTEGRATION & DATA MANAGEMENT: 4.25 Stars**

ProSystem *fx* Practice Management integrates with ProSystem *fx* Tax and several third-party software applications. The ProSystem *fx* Tax integration includes the ability to open the tax application as well as the appropriate client file through a simple double-click on the project. A timer is automatically started and is linked back to the project in ProSystem *fx* Practice Management. Client contact data is shared between the two programs and updates are shared automatically.

Third-party integration is provided for Microsoft Outlook to push client contact data housed within ProSystem *fx* Practice Management to Outlook. Employee time information may be accumulated and shared with Sage Abra Payroll to process employee payroll. General ledger accounting data may be exported to Sage MAS 90, 200 and 500. Additional third-party software may also achieve integration, but will require custom configuration.

### **HELP/SUPPORT: 4.75 Stars**

In-program help is provided through the Help options inside ProSystem *fx* Practice Management. Additional links are also included for web based assistance as well as chat and email support. An online knowledgebase is maintained is frequently updated based on customer feedback. The knowledgebase also provides users step-by-step instructions on navigation and troubleshooting various areas in the solution. Telephone support is also provided. All help and support options noted above are included with the initial purchase and annual renewal pricing.

A number of training options are provided by CCH to further enhance the user experience. Training may be done through numerous on-site, one-on-one web based, or online self-study options. Users may attend prescheduled web based seminars hosted by CCH throughout the year. Pricing for training options varies greatly and is largely dependent upon user needs and preferred training method.

### **PRICING & SUMMARY**

ProSystem *fx* Practice Management offers a sophisticated practice management system. Built around dashboard technology, the solution assists partners and owners in better understanding the productivity and profitability of the firm. ProSystem *fx* Practice Management is easily scalable to fit the needs of sole practitioners to firms with 1,500 or more employees. Three editions of the solution are provided for server and workstation users.

Pricing for the Office Edition, which includes all features mentioned in the review, starts around \$3,500 for a 5 user license. The Basic Edition, which offers scaled back features, starts around \$1,500 for a 5 user license. The third edition, Enterprise, is designed for large organizations with fully implemented Microsoft SQL technology for other in-house software needs. Pricing for the Enterprise Edition is priced per user. Annual renewal pricing is currently set at 35% of the original purchase and includes all product support as well as enhancements and feature updates to the solution.

## **2013 Overall Rating: 4.75 Stars**

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